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Occupational injuries and diseases

Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods

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From its inception, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognised the importance of establishing an adequate statistical basis for the measurement and analysis of work related hazards and risks. Recommendations on the concepts associated with those statistics were made at the first, sixth, tenth, thirteenth and sixteenth (1998) International Conferences of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Recommendations of the sixteenth ICLS are described in this section, along with sources of occupational injuries and diseases data available for Australia.

Concepts and international guidelines

An occupational injury is defined as:

"...any personal injury, disease or death resulting from an occupational accident."

An occupational disease is defined as:

"...a disease contracted as a result of an exposure over a period of time to risk factors arising from work activity."

[International Labour Organization, 16th ICLS, 1998 \(https://ilostat.ilo.org/about/standards/icls/\)](https://ilostat.ilo.org/about/standards/icls/)

The following terms, used when measuring the nature and incidence of occupational injuries, were also defined by the sixteenth ICLS:

- occupational accident - an unexpected and unplanned occurrence, including acts of violence, arising out of or in connection with work, which results in one or more workers incurring a personal injury or death;
- commuting accident - an accident resulting in death or injury which occurs on the habitual route, in either direction, between the place of work or work-related training and: (1) the worker's residence; (2) the place where the worker usually takes meals; or (3) the place where the worker usually receives remuneration; and
- incapacity for work - the inability of a worker, due to an occupational injury, to perform the normal duties or tasks of the job occupied at the time of the accident.

The sixteenth ICLS made recommendations in relation to the coverage of statistics on occupational injuries and the types of information countries should aim to collect. Data should be collected for all of the occupational injuries defined above, for both fatal and non-fatal injuries, which cause an absence of work of at least one day (excluding the day of the accident). The statistics should cover all workers regardless of their status in employment (e.g. employees, employers and own-account workers), as well as child workers, informal sector workers and home workers.

The measurement unit recommended to be used for statistics on the nature and incidence of occupational injuries should be the 'case of occupational injury'. If a person is injured in more than one occupational accident during the reference period, each case of injury to that person should be separately counted. The sixteenth ICLS also recommended that data should be collected on: the enterprise, establishment or local unit; the person injured; the injury; and the accident and its circumstances.

Australian collections and definitions

In Australia, statistics on occupational injuries and diseases are available from household surveys conducted by the ABS, and administrative records of state, territory and Australian compensation authorities compiled by Safe Work Australia.

ABS Household Surveys

The main ABS statistics relating to the incidence of occupational injury and disease are available from the Work-related injuries topic on the Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS) (see the section relating to the MPHS in this publication). The survey covers injuries sustained by all categories of employed workers, including injuries that have been claimed under workers' compensation and injuries that have not been claimed under workers' compensation. It excludes work-related illnesses or injuries resulting in death.

While the terminology used in the Work-related injuries survey topic ('work-related injuries') differs from that used in the international standards, the underlying definitions are broadly consistent with those recommended by the ICLS. The survey has not sought to distinguish between 'work-related illnesses', 'work-related injuries' or 'work-related injuries sustained on journeys to or from work'. Instead, it broadly defines work-related injuries as illnesses or injuries sustained as a result of work activities, on a journey to or from work, or the aggravation of pre-existing conditions where employment was a contributory factor.

Some data are also available from the Australian Health Survey, which collects information about recent illnesses and long term conditions and whether they are work-related. For more information on survey content and methodology, see the [Australian Health Survey](#):

Safe Work Australia's National Data Set for Compensation-based statistics

Safe Work Australia's National Data Set (NDS) for Compensation-based Statistics is a standard set of data items, concepts and definitions for inclusion in workers' compensation systems operating in Australia, and enables the production of national and nationally comparable workers' compensation-based data. It is compiled from compensable injuries and diseases made under the state, territory and Australian Government worker's compensation Acts, and as such only covers compensable injuries and diseases (not information on workers not covered for workers' compensation, or who choose not to make a claim).

The NDS is supported by several classification systems, including the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) and the Type of Occurrence Classification System (TOOCS). TOOCS is central to NDS. It consists of hierarchical classifications for the nature, bodily location, mechanism, breakdown agency and agency of injury or disease.

Definitions of occupational injuries and occupational diseases used in the NDS are consistent with international standards. These definitions are:

- Occupational injuries - all employment related injuries which are the result of a single traumatic event occurring while a person is on duty or during a recess period, and where there was a short or non-existent latency period. This includes injuries which are the result of a single exposure to an agent(s) causing an acute toxic effect.
- Occupational diseases - all employment related diseases which result from repeated or long-term exposure to an agent(s) or event(s), or which are the result of a single traumatic event where there was a long latency period (for example, the development of hepatitis following a single exposure to the infection).

The NDS coverage of workers' compensation claims is consistent with international standards, except for:

- occupational injuries of self-employed persons (note: the definition of self-employed workers varies across jurisdictions and is not necessarily consistent with ABS definitions);
- occurrences covered under separate legislation for specific groups of workers;
- occurrences where the workers' compensation claims are pending, in dispute, withdrawn or rejected; and
- occurrences not claimed as workers' compensation.

The type and level of detail of the information to be collected for each claim is consistent with international standards and include:

- employer description - industry, size of business;
- employee characteristics - date of birth, sex;
- job characteristics - occupation, duty status (e.g. at work, commuting, away from work), number of hours usually worked each week, normal weekly earnings, labour hire indicator, apprentice/trainee indicator;
- occurrence details - date of occurrence/report, nature of injury/disease, bodily location of injury/disease, mechanism of injury/disease, agency of injury/disease, breakdown agency of injury/disease; and
- outcome of incident - time lost, severity indicator, payments made.

More information on the NDS and workers' compensation data is available from [Safe Work Australia \(https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/national-dataset-compensation-based-statistics-3rd-edition-revision-1\)](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/national-dataset-compensation-based-statistics-3rd-edition-revision-1).